

Message Text

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TAGS: TBIO, TPHY, IN
SUBJECT: BAN ON EXPORT OF RHESUS MONKEYS

REF: (A) STATE 5458; (B) 77 NEW DELHI 17137; (C) 77 NEW DELHI 17568

1. PREVIOUS INDIAN EXPORTS OF MONKEYS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

INDIA FISCAL YEAR (APRIL-MARCH)	TOTAL EXPORTED	EXPORTS TO U.S.
1973/4	32975	22113
1974/5	29078	20808
1975/6	27906	20763
1976/7	06537	10536

(APRIL-JAN.)

THESE FIGURES COVER ALL TYPES OF MONKEYS. THE FIGURES FOR RHESUS MONKEYS ALONE ARE NOT AVAILABLE, BUT THE AUTHORIZED CEILING FOR THE FIRST TWO YEARS CITED ABOVE WAS 30,000, DROPPING TO 20,000 FOR FY 75-76 AND 76-77.

2. AS WE REPORTED IN REFS B AND C, THE EXPORT BAN
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APPLIES TO ALL COUNTRIES AND TO ALL TYPES OF MONKEYS. IT IS BEING INTERPRETED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO PERMIT THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR'S QUOTAS TO BE HONORED (INCLUDING EXPECTED SHIPMENTS OF ABOUT 6,650 ANIMALS TO THE U.S. AFTER THE BAN TOOK EFFECT IN NOVEMBER.)

3. OUR BEST INFORMATION IS THAT THE APPEAL BY THE

INTERNATIONAL PRIMATE PROTECTION LEAGUE (IPPL) TO PRIME MINISTER DESAI WAS WHAT PROMPTED THE BAN (SEE REF B). THE ORDER TO BAN MONKEY EXPORTS WAS GIVEN PERSONALLY BY THE PRIME MINISTER. THE INDIAN PRESS BOTH BEFORE THE BAN WAS ANNOUNCED AND SUBSEQUENTLY HAS GIVEN CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY TO STORIES ABOUT THE U.S. ARMY'S USE OF MONKEYS, ALLEGEDLY INDIAN MONKEYS, FOR TESTING THE EFFECTS OF THE NEUTRON BOMB. THUS, THE IMMEDIATE IMPETUS FOR THE IPPL APPROACH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ALLEGATIONS OF INHUMANE TREATMENT OF MONKEYS IN THE U.S. HOWEVER, BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER'S INCLINATIONS AND THE VIEWS OF A GREAT MANY INDIANS WOULD TEND TO FAVOR BANNING MONKEY EXPORTS. MONKEYS HAVE RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE IN INDIA SO EVEN THEIR USE IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH IS SENSITIVE HERE.

4. THE OFFICIAL GOI VIEW IS THAT THE MONKEY EXPORT BAN WILL CONTINUE IN THE FUTURE. THE PRIME MINISTER APPARENTLY FEELS VERY STRONGLY ABOUT THIS. THERE IS SOME SENTIMENT IN THE COMMERCE DEPARTMENT FOR RELAXING THE BAN BECAUSE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS FROM MONKEY EXPORTS. SCIENTIFIC OFFICIALS ALSO RECOGNIZE THE NEED FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH ON MONKEYS, AND ARE CONCERNED THAT EVEN THE TOTAL RESEARCH USING MONKEYS MAY BE IMPAIRED IF THE MONKEY SUPPLIERS CLOSE DOWN THEIR FACILITIES WITH THE LOSS OF THE EXPORT MARKET. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT WE DO NOT HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THESE VIEWS CARRY MUCH WEIGHT WITHIN THE GOI AT PRESENT. ACCORDINGLY, WE RATE THE PROSPECTS OF SECURING A LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO AS POOR.

5. THE MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACH FOR ANY POSSIBLE USG REPRESENTATIONS ON THE BAN WOULD BE (A) TO EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR MONKEYS IN VACCINE PRODUCTION, AND (B) TO WORK IN CONCERT WITH WHO AND OTHER USER COUNTRIES. WE SEE NO HARM IN USG REPRESENTATIONS, ALTHOUGH WE RATE THEIR CHANCES OF SUCCESS AT WELL BELOW 50-50.

6. THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION HERE WILL PROBABLY BE APPROACHING MEA SHORTLY ON THIS SUBJECT, DESCRIBING THE USES FOR WHICH THE UK NEEDS MONKEYS (NOTABLY POLIO AND YELLOW FEVER VACCINE, AND OTHER DIRECTLY BENEFICIAL BIOMEDICAL WORK) AND ASKING THAT THE BAN BE "RECONSIDERED". GOHEEN

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